

THE MILK FLOW

JANUARY 2021

Message from the board

As Dairy Farmers, we understand how extremely complex dairy farming is. Climate, extreme droughts, fires and floods have impacted on our profit margins. In order for us to maximise profitability, we are constantly managing inputs to optimise a multitude of marginal responses, which inevitably change according to climatic and international markets for input and output prices. But as Dairy Farmers our resilience prevails, we deeply care for our cows and the environment and we strive for improvements in all areas on farm.

Despite the drought conditions, the Dairy Farm Monitor Data shows an increase in profitability, indicated by the average EBIT of NSW dairy farmers. Increased profitability was delivered by a more sustainable milk price and an improvement in conditions, without which many would have struggled to make a profit. Interestingly, the difference in profitability between the top and bottom farmers increased to \$7.62 per Kg MS last year, the highest in 5 years. This gap in profitability

provides an insight on the potential that can be achieved on NSW dairy farms.

Dairy NSW drives regional-specific research, development, and extension and is here to support you, our NSW dairy farmers to improve your profitability. We aim to increase farmer skills and knowledge, to improve and protect the performance of our dairy herds. Dairy NSW holds an annual Members Council with the Regional Dairy Groups and industry key stakeholders, this year being held on the 16th February 2021. Have you got any issues you would like to explore or discuss? Ideas for activities you think may lead to better engagement with dairy farmers in NSW to improve profitability and farm performance? Drop an email to info@dairynsw.com.au or contact your local Regional Dairy Group representatives with your ideas, together we can improve success and profitability as a dairy industry.

James Neal, **Chair Dairy NSW**



Staff Profile

Rob Cooper
Regional Extension Officer, DairyNSW

Rob Cooper has joined us as a Regional Extension Officer for the Hunter, Tamworth, Central West and Wagga regions on a casual basis. Rob says: I am really looking forward to contributing as an REO with Dairy NSW, helping farmers manage their farm and business for now and into the future. I am particularly keen to see farmers participate in the Our Farm, Our Plan program, to help plan what needs to be put in place to assure the long-term profitability of their dairy business. Get in touch with Rob.

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Director Profile

Graeme Hollis
Director, DairyNSW

There is a saying 'It's easy to get the boy out of the country, but more difficult to get the country out of the boy'. The Dairy industry has been that way for me. I grew up in third generation on a family dairy farm in the Hastings Valley (Mid North Coast of NSW) did some tertiary study (with a smattering of dairy content) worked as a Field Officer for Dairy Farmers for 9 years and proceeded to accumulate 30 years of experience in Agribusiness across a range of sectors including Viticulture, Dairy, Broadacre cropping, Cotton, Agri banking and Animal Health. All the while keeping an involvement in the Dairy Industry. Across the range of agricultural sectors, I have found many commonalities, but several stand out. I am pleased to have another opportunity to make a contribution to the Dairy industry in NSW and Australia as a Director on the Dairy NSW Board, sharing my enthusiasm for information, effective and harmonious workplaces and complying with the rules we must operate by.

Fall Armyworm

Fall Armyworm (FAW) is a new plant pest in Australia that has the potential to cause significant damage to a wide range of crops. It first appeared in Australia in early 2020 and has been detected in Queensland, NSW and Western Australia.

Fall armyworm is reported to feed on more than 350 plant species, including maize, cotton, rice, sorghum, sugarcane, tropical pastures, wheat, and vegetable and fruit crops, and has caused significant economic losses overseas. Destruction of crops can happen rapidly when infestation levels are high. From a dairy farming point of view, there is a concern about the potential damage the pest can do to maize and sorghum crops in particular.

Local land services as well as State Government Agriculture departments have been quite active in recent weeks in relation to monitoring and detection of FAW, with pheromone traps laid in several areas of QLD, NSW and Northern Victoria.

This insect is airborne and is likely to thrive in the warmer, more tropical areas, but could potentially move south during the summer months and then back in a more northerly direction in winter. Therefore there is a concern about its potential impact on summer crops, from Queensland down to Northern Victoria. It also has a short life cycle in warmer conditions allowing large numbers to build quickly.

If you suspect FAW is present in your region, it is important to report it immediately to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

The hotline will connect you to the responsible authority in your state or territory. Reporting the presence of FAW will assist in the response effort.

For control and management of a FAW armyworm infestation, it is strongly recommended to consult immediately with your agronomist for specific advice on the best approach to manage the pest.



Damaged maize. Image: D Visser, ARC-VOP Roodeplaat

Farmer focus

We want to get to know you!

We are looking for Dairy Farmers in NSW who are interested in sharing your story in a Farmer centred article for our next edition of MilkFlow. This is your chance to tell us what you love about dairy farming, your challenges and achievements, key interests, working on farm, in the farm business or in the home supporting your family farm. Drop us an email at info@dairynsw.com.au if you are keen.



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New project to deliver genomics results boost

The Australian dairy industry will halve the time it takes to return animal genomic tests to farmers as part of a new project to assist on-farm breeding decisions.

A collaboration between DataGene and Dairy Australia, the Accelerating Genomics Project will also bolster genomics education and make it easier for farmers to capitalise on the benefits of DNA testing, particularly for females.

DataGene project leader, Michelle Axford, said improvements in the genomic testing process would have practical on-farm productivity benefits.

'Having a more complete set of genomic results quicker means farmers can make decisions early,' she said.

'If you are going to genomically test animals, you may as well do this while they are still drinking milk. When you get the results, you can make the decisions about who's in the gate and who is not before the calves have been weaned.'

Using genomics for early management decisions, such as identifying low genetic merit heifers, can minimise mistakes such as selling the 'wrong' animal, based solely on its appearance or date of birth.

It also ensures the best animals are reared as replacements and enter the milking herd, a proven way to increase a herd's genetic gain.

The project involves significant investment in enhancing DataGene's genetic evaluation system and a communication and extension campaign to support farmers in getting started and using the results.

Dr Stephanie Bullen, Dairy Australia Lead in Animal Health and Fertility said genomic testing of females had the potential for a quantum leap in genetic improvement in dairy herds.

Genetic gain is permanent and compounds every year and the genetic merit of the Australian herd has improved continually in the 30 years since Australian Breeding Values were introduced (see graph).

'In the past, most of that gain in Australian dairy herds has come from the use of better AI sires to breed replacements. Genomic testing your heifer calves allows you to accurately identify your best

replacements and make more targeted management and mating decisions. It also allows you to fast-track gains in traits of importance to you, for example with fertility being one example,' Stephanie said.

The first stage of the project is to improve the turnaround time for genomic test results.

Michelle Axford said that in Australia the current turnaround time for genomic results can be up to eight weeks.

'When you look around the world best practice is less than four weeks, she said.

Xhead: System improvements

Speeding up Australia's turnaround time involves a number of system improvements that are in development with expected delivery over the coming nine months.

One example includes automatic corrections where the computer identifies a pedigree mistake through DNA patterns and the technology finds the other errors and fixes them, for clients who want this service.

Another important step is the weekly release of genomic information replacing the monthly data dump where herd test centres will be able to feed information daily to DataGene.

'Information recorded on farm that day is used by a genomic service provider that night,' Michelle said.

'For example, a calf born today can be entered in farm software and the dairy industry's Central Data Repository knows about it that night. That information will be available to initiate a test tomorrow or as soon as the sample arrives from the genomic lab. This avoids waiting for the next monthly dump of data.'

Improvements in the efficiencies of the Australian genomic pipeline will speed-up results for both male and female animals.

For more information on the Accelerating Genomics Project contact Michelle Axford, maxford@datagene.com.au or Stephanie Bullen stephanie.bullen@dairyaustralia.com.au



You Got This Mate

Men are three times more likely to die by suicide than women and rural men are much less likely to use psychological services for their mental health problems.

To help address this issue the Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) consulted with rural men to develop a new website which provides useful tips on how and why to take action and connects men to the best possible care in their local area.

'You Got This Mate' yougotthismate.com.au provides action-focused tips and information and also features videos of rural men sharing their stories about their own journey and struggles with mental health and what they do now to keep well. One of these stories is Warren Davies previously a Dairy Farmer and now a facilitator of 'The Unbreakable Farmer'.

Warren faced many challenges including floods, family disputes, and the ongoing drought all of which significantly impacted on his mental health.

'For me finding the right type of support for my mental health took time and a lot of energy. If I had access to a website such as 'You Got This Mate' it would have made my journey a lot easier,' Warren said.

'This is partly because it allows you to investigate your own journey in your own time and is less intimidating than calling someone that might not understand. It is also user-friendly.

'People living in rural and regional towns also don't have the same access to services that city people have which is why this website is so important.

'By sharing my story I hope that I encourage others to get help when they need to and if they jump on this website it can help them with some strategies on what they can do now to keep themselves strong,' Warren said.

We know that seeking help early gives you a better chance of a quick recovery and reduces your risk of mental health problems in the future.

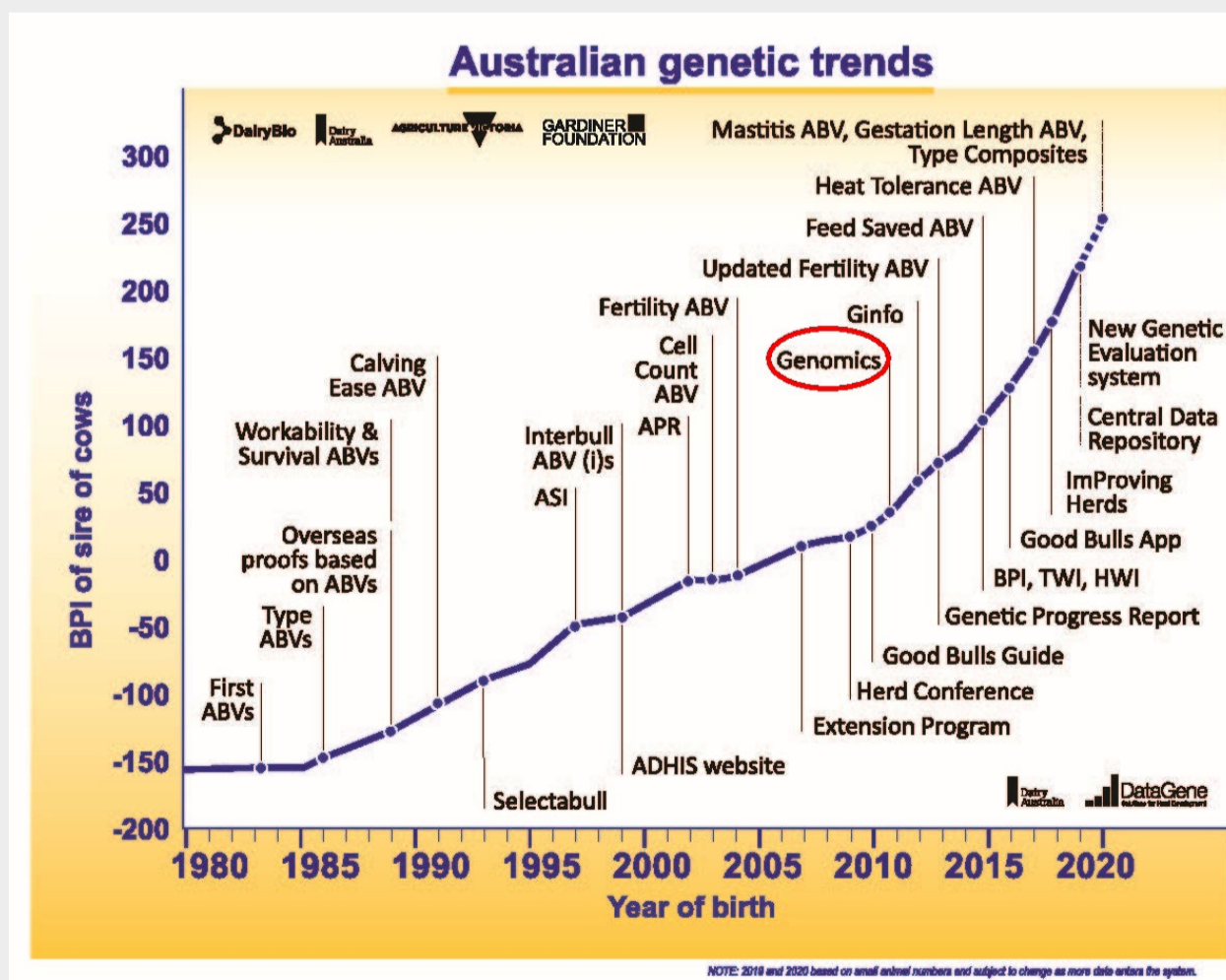
It was also important to have a resource which provides guidance on how to have a conversation if someone is showing signs of a mental health problem, key signs to identify and where to go for help.

To find out more about RAMHP or to find an RAMHP Coordinator in your local area, visit ramhp.com.au or email ramhp@newcastle.edu.au

If you have any concerns about yourself or a loved one, please contact the NSW Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511 (free call for landlines) for advice or call Lifeline on 13 11 14. For guidelines on safe media reporting about suicide, mental ill-health and alcohol and other drugs, head to Mindframe on mindframe.org.au

Contact Jocelyn Johnston 6363 8471 about the Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) or read more at ramhp.com.au

Figure 1 30-year genetic trends (Holstein version)



Genomic testing of sires has fast tracked the rate of genetic gain since its introduction in 2012. Genomic testing of females is an opportunity for a quantum leap in genetic gain.

Dairy Australia introduces program to help farmers achieve long-term goals

A new program from Dairy Australia is helping dairy farmers to document their long-term goals on a single page and put plans in place to achieve them.

Our Farm, Our Plan has been developed by Dairy Australia with support from Dairy NZ and the Gardiner Foundation and is designed to help farmers answer some of the big questions, clarify business and personal goals, and prioritise what to do next.

For a 12-month period, farmers receive support to put their plan on a page and get everyone in their business on the same page.

Dairy Australia farm performance lead Neil Webster said research had shown that when goals were documented people's commitment increased and they were more likely to carry through with the actions needed to achieve their goals.

'This process is applied in commercial organisations across the world because it makes things achievable and visible,' he said.

'Our Farm, Our Plan gets people thinking longer-term and helps them to clarify their goals and prioritise what to do next.'

'It also gets everyone in the business to be clear about and, hopefully, agree about their goals.'

The program is freely available for dairy farmers and includes two key resources - the Farm Fitness Checklist and the Quickplan - which farmers will work through in a combination of group sessions and one-on-one sessions with consultants.

Farmers or discussion groups interested in participating in Our Farm, Our Plan and getting their Plan on a Page should contact their Dairy Australia regional team or visit the Dairy Australia website.



Setting goals important for young couple

Dairy Australia's *Our Farm, Our Plan* program has given Chris and Alicia Drew an opportunity to lay the foundation for their business and personal goals early in their dairying career.

Chris and Alicia returned to farm with Chris's parents Peter and Alison four years ago where they milk 400 cows in a split-calving system at Nyora in Victoria's south Gippsland.

'I worked as an electrician and Alicia works as a paramedic,' Chris said.

'We could have stayed in those jobs forever and lived a pretty cruisy life with weekends off, but we wanted to get ahead and grow our assets, which is something you can do quite quickly in the dairy industry.'

Chris and Alicia were invited to be part of the Our Farm, Our Plan pilot in early 2019, an offer which they eagerly accepted.

The opportunity to think long term about what they wanted to achieve and how they would achieve it was a big factor in them getting involved, Chris said.

'When we decided to return to the dairy industry we had ideas about what we wanted to achieve but never wrote anything down, but from the discussions we had as part of the Our Farm, Our Plan process we came up with four focus areas which encompassed what we wanted to achieve,' he said.

Our Farm, Our Plan creates a plan on a single page that everyone owns and which can be shared and used to track progress.

'They were financial growth, job satisfaction, lifestyle and family.'

'From that, we were able to map out how we would achieve those goals and put short and long-term plans in place to achieve them.'

Chris said the Our Farm, Our Plan process had been the catalyst for much bigger discussions about the future, such as buying and leasing land, understanding what they could afford and talking to banks.

'Often as farmers it's easy to get caught up too much in the day-to-day running of the farm, without taking time to think about the bigger picture,' he said.

'But each day becomes a week which becomes a month, a season, a year and all of a sudden years have passed and you haven't made any real progress.'

'Not enough people actually plan their outcomes and they just end up rolling with whatever ends up happening.'

'It's also forced us to make decisions not only about our farming future but what we want our lifestyle to look like.'

'For us, we have found using both the Quickplan and Farm Fitness Checklist provided as part of Our Farm, Our Plan has been very beneficial, and putting our plan on a page means we've got it down on paper as a reference point.'

'The workshops were great and were run in the middle of the day so you can squeeze it in between milkings, and the farm visit was done at a time that suited us.'

'I think that small investment in time will be very valuable for us in the long run. We now have a vision of what we want our future to look like and have achievable steps in place to make it become a reality.'

Goals refresher a worthwhile exercise

The opportunity to revisit and refresh goals they had set earlier in their dairying career as part of Dairy Australia's Our Farm, Our Plan program was too good to pass up for Darryl and Trudi Hammond.

The Hammonds farm at Buln Buln in Victoria's Gippsland where they milk 430 cows in a pasture-based system.

They had been involved in a program similar to Our Farm, Our Plan with a private company about 15 years ago, which they saw as a very valuable experience in documenting goals and the processes they would implement to achieve them.

'Our Farm, Our Plan has been an opportunity for us to reinforce where we are going on our dairying journey and how we plan to get there,' Mr Hammond said.

'Since our original plan 15 years ago, our goals had changed slightly in some aspects and a lot in others due to factors such as milk price, seasonal variability and our own health.'

Broadly, the Hammonds' goals revolved around themes of financial security, family, having time away from the farm and remaining committed to the same ideals.

'There's no point in me wanting to grow the business if Trudi wants to get out, which highlights the importance of both of us being on the same page,' Mr Hammond said.

'The program has made both Trudi and I realise that despite how tough the last 18 months have been, we actually really enjoy what we do.'

Being around like-minded couples in the industry as part of Our Farm, Our Plan - some older and approaching retirement, some younger and just starting out in dairying - has been a rewarding experience for the Hammonds.

'It is nice to get off the farm, be challenged and be immersed among other like-minded farmers,' Mr Hammond said.

'For us, we are probably at the midpoint in our journey as both of us are about 50 years old.'

'We have just invested heavily in a new dairy and bought more land and being involved in Our Farm, Our Plan made Trudi and I sit down and put things on paper again.'

'Yes, we are going ahead in leaps and bounds, but the program has also made us have other discussions and put an exit plan in place should any major issues arise.'

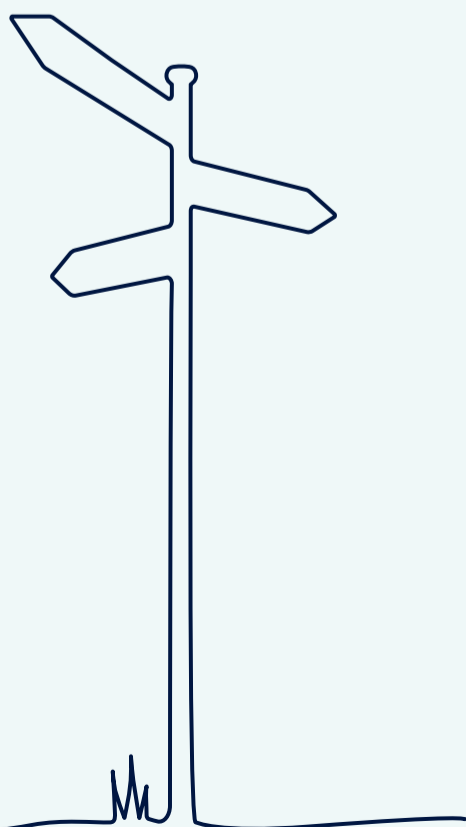
Mr Hammond said there was something in the program for everyone, no matter where they were at in their dairy career.

'Some farmers might be floundering and not feeling good about the business in which case I think it's a good thing to sit down and have an open and frank discussion,' he said.

'They don't delve dollar for dollar into the business or anything like that and there are people involved with the program who know the industry inside out.'

'It would help anyone in that situation to set a direction.'

'Alternatively, for other farmers who might be feeling more motivated it would help them to set goals and put plans in place to achieve them.'



Total Traineeship

Employers have the opportunity to train Australia's future farmers while receiving Government incentives for hiring a trainee - including drought, skills shortage areas, and mature aged workers (eligibility rules apply). Until 30/9/2021 the Federal Government assists with up to 50 per cent of wages paid to apprentices. NSW rebates for accommodation and travel are also available. Contact Jill Clayton, Traineeship Coordinator on 02 4939 8878 or email jill.clayton@dpi.nsw.gov.au for more information.



Dairy Management Masterclass

April Browne, **Lead Learning and Development Partners Dairy Australia**
 Sally Roberts, **Lead People Dairy Australia**
 Felicity Blackstock, **Manager Learning & Development Dairy Australia**

The Power of Capable People

The role of capability development for driving dairy farm business profitability and sustainability

The 2030 Roadmap proposed by the National Farmers Federation, articulates an ambitious target for production growth in Australian agriculture of \$100 billion in farm gate output by 2030.

Recent research by the Tasmanian Institute for Agriculture (TIA) found that nearly 60 per cent of farmer respondents identified a shortage of people and capability as one of the top four areas limiting growth of the Tasmanian dairy industry over the next 10 years. This sentiment is not limited to the state of Tasmania nor dairy, but is nationwide and cross sector and the demand for capability is never more evident than for people who are the leaders of our farm businesses – the farm managers.

Market and technological changes have fuelled rapid growth in average farm size and with this, a subsequent increase in the complexity of farm business structures and growing demand for increased business management capability across the agricultural workforce. The role of the dairy farm manager now extends beyond the paddock into the office, and the capabilities required demands a diverse, business-centric skill set. Our future farm managers require well developed business acumen with capability strengths in strategic thinking, critical analysis, decision making, problem solving, human resource management and effective communication. Furthermore, to ensure true success, farm business managers will also be effective leaders, possessing the vision, self-awareness, motivation and innovative thinking to empower others and drive farm businesses forward. With this in mind, there is a need to develop specific learning opportunities to meet the capability needs of our current and future dairy farm managers so they may work smarter, not harder in achieving industry growth targets.

The importance of identifying capabilities required by people of the dairy industry, in order to develop suitably aligned learning experiences, is not limited to the role of dairy farm manager. In fact, across the dairy workforce we must as an industry, outline the minimum standards for certain roles and highlight areas where gaps in the capabilities of people are present if we are to be profitable and sustainable. The Dairy Capability Framework Project is currently being undertaken by Dairy Australia in partnership with Western Sydney University and consultation with the farming sector, to determine the key thresholds for skills required by people within or entering the Australian dairy industry. The study will serve as a necessary tool for informing and enabling delivery of the industry learning and capability development

strategies to work towards having a capable and sustainable workforce.

In identifying the capabilities required of our dairy farm manager workforce as an example, Dairy Australia in partnership with farmers and the higher education sector, have embarked on an ambitious project to address a workforce shortage of people with the capabilities required to manage a dairy farm business. Through multiple complementary pathways, people wishing to pursue a career in dairy farm management are provided with a clear learning pathway to develop the capabilities required to pursue this career and reach their goals. As farm businesses continue to become increasingly sophisticated, tertiary education is one enabler of capability development for the on-farm workforce, particularly those fulfilling senior management positions.

For existing undergraduate students, work integrated learning opportunities including work placements, field projects and farm visits are being offered to develop foundational technical knowledge, professional networks and strategic applied thinking required for successfully pursuing a career in dairy farm management. These experiences are positioning graduates to be work ready for on-farm roles in new ways that have not been done before.

For those currently employed on farm in pre-management roles, new initiatives arising from partnerships between the dairy industry and higher education sector, specifically the development of a Masterclass in Dairy Farm Management, will provide a fresh opportunity for prospective dairy farm managers to develop the skills and knowledge they require to effectively operate a dairy farm business in the 21st century. These will include core capabilities in leadership, people and culture, farm systems, business development and strategy and financial management which underpin the profitability and sustainability of dairy farm businesses.

First and foremost, we must recognise that farmers are business people and if we are to have profitable and sustainable businesses which achieve ambitious growth targets, we must actively pursue and invest in capability development of our people so that they may be adaptable and resilient and prosper in the dynamic operating environment we find ourselves in as agriculturalists.

For more information about learning and development for current and future dairy farm managers, contact April Browne, Lead Learning and Development Partners at april.browne@dairyaustralia.com.au

For more information about the Masterclass in Dairy Farm Management visit utas.edu.au/dairy-masterclass

What's On

February

3	Farm Business Fundamentals online
9	Seasonal Update, Summer Production and Autumn Planning, Taree
9-12	Business Governance & Investment Forum with David Heinjus, multiple locations
10	Pasture Field Day, Tocal
10	Farm Business Fundamentals online
17	Farm Business Fundamentals online
22	Supported Co-working Farm Accounting, Old Bar
24	Farm Business Fundamentals online
25-26	Feeding Pasture for Profit, Comboyne

March

3	Farm Business Fundamentals online
10	Farm Business Fundamentals online
10	Ask the Researcher – FFVI & FVI

May

18	Tamworth Rabobank Family Business Matters Workshop
20	Tocal Rabobank Family Business Matters Workshop

June

1	Bega Rabobank Succession Planning Workshop
3	Worrigee RaboBank Succession Planning Workshop

More info at dairyaustralia.com.au/dairynsw



We're for farmers

Dairy farmers are unfairly impacted by competition failures in their supply chain. This starts at the supermarket checkout with irrationally low retail prices, then continues at the farmgate where farmers can be given a raw deal for their product. NSW Farmers has been tirelessly advocating for improved supply chain conditions for dairy farmers.

Retail prices

NSW Farmers continues to urge the retailers to lift their pricing on popular dairy items. We have conducted media campaigns and have implored politicians to pressure the retailers. If the supermarkets don't step up, we will continue to explore other options until farmers see a fair price for their product.

Mandatory Dairy Code of Conduct

NSW Farmers played an instrumental role in the final design of the code, and in the code becoming mandated. With the code being put to test for the first time during the 2020/2021 supply period, we will stay abreast of any issues that arise and ensure our members are properly represented.

Helping our members in disaster recovery

NSW Farmers facilitated the distribution of major donations to our dairy members through our bushfire relief fund, and successfully advocated for meaningful bushfire recovery packages from the NSW Government.

Join NSW Farmers today at nswfarmers.org.au or call 1300 794 000

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Dairy SnapShot

Dairy NSW emails a monthly newsletter with key events, industry updates, news, programs and support relevant for you on farm.

If you don't already receive this please drop us an email to info@dairynsw.com.au and we will get in touch with you!

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